



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

The Big Five Foodborne Illnesses Information Sheet

E. Coli

Overview: A bacterium that can produce a deadly toxin and causes approximately 73,000 cases of foodborne illness each year in the U.S.; Sources: meat, especially undercooked or raw hamburger, produce and raw milk

Incubation Period: 3-4 days

Symptoms: Severe diarrhea, cramping, dehydration

Prevention: Cook implicated food to 155F; wash hands properly & frequently; correctly wash, rinse & sanitize dishware

Shigella

Overview: Causes an estimated 300,000 cases of diarrhea illnesses. Poor hygiene causes *Shigella* to be easily passed from person to person. Sources: salads, milk and dairy products, and unclean water.

Incubation Period: 1-7 days

Symptoms: Diarrhea, fever, chills, and dehydration

Prevention: Wash hands frequently and properly, especially after using the restroom; wash vegetables thoroughly

Hepatitis A

Overview: Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus. Hepatitis A can affect anyone. In the United States, hepatitis A can occur in situations ranging from isolated cases of disease to widespread epidemics.

Incubation Period: 15-50 days

Symptoms: Jaundice, nausea, diarrhea, fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, cramps

Prevention: Wash hands frequently and properly, especially after using the restroom

Salmonella

Overview: Most common cause of foodborne deaths. Responsible for millions of cases of foodborne illness a year; Sources: raw and undercooked eggs, undercooked poultry and meat, dairy products, seafood, fruits and vegetables

Incubation Period: 5-72 hours

Symptoms: Nausea, vomiting, cramps, and fever

Prevention: Cook all food to proper temperatures; chill food rapidly; eliminate sources of cross contamination (i.e. proper meat storage, proper wash, rinse, and sanitize procedure)

Norovirus

Overview: This virus is the leading cause of diarrhea in the United States. Any food can be contaminated with norovirus if handled by someone who is infected with this virus. This virus is highly infectious.

Incubation Period: 6-48 hours

Symptoms: Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and cramps

Prevention: Wash hands frequently and properly, especially after using the restroom; obtain food from a reputable food source; and wash vegetables thoroughly.

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